

THE LEICESTERSHIRE
ARCHAEOLOGICAL & HISTORICAL SOCIETY
THE GUILDHALL · LEICESTER · LE1 5FQ



NEWSLETTER 108 Autumn 2020

Welcome to the latest edition of the LAHS Newsletter. We hope you are remaining well and may have been able to take advantage of the easing of some COVID-19 restrictions. This Newsletter will have less actual news than usual, but we hope that you will still enjoy reading it. Contributions to future editions of the Newsletter are as always welcome at any time. While The Guildhall remains closed we will not be able to pick up items sent by post, so please email them to the editor, Cynthia Brown, at newsletter@lahs.org.uk. LAHS Committee meetings will resume 'remotely' in September!

LAHS NEWS

LECTURE PROGRAMME

Our Hon Lectures Secretary, Yolanda Courtney, has organised the following provisional lecture programme – but our ability to hold lectures in 2020 - 21 remains conditional on Government policy and permission for public gatherings during the pandemic. If we are able to hold these events, social distancing requirements will have an impact on the numbers of people able to attend, and we may have to use a booking system such as Eventbrite. If they do go ahead, they will all take place at 7.30 pm in the Victorian Gallery at Leicester Museum and Art Gallery – the new name for New Walk Museum - unless otherwise stated. If we are unable to hold any meetings, we hope to make presentations available in digital format online. Updates will be communicated to members by email and social media.

Thursday 24 September 2020

Scarborough Lecture

Henry III – ‘a simple and God-fearing king’

Dr David Carpenter, Kings College London

Thursday 5 November 2020

The archaeology of domestic innovation in country houses

Professor Marilyn Palmer, School of Archaeology & Ancient History, University of Leicester

Wednesday 25 November 2020

165th LAHS Annual General Meeting, at The Guildhall, Leicester, followed by a lecture

Metal detecting in Leicestershire: questions from the past

Phil Harding, Leicestershire detectorist

Thursday 3 December 2020

The Real King Arthur: a sixth-century North British hero

Professor Andrew Breeze, University of Navarre, Pamplona

Thursday 14 January 2021
Leicester and the Spanish Civil War
Adrian Pole and Henry Brown,
local historians

Thursday 11 February 2021
Members' evening
There will be short lectures by members in the Lord Mayor's Room at New Walk Museum. If you would like to present the results of your research to fellow members, please contact the Hon. Lecture Secretary at lectures@lahs.org.uk, or by phone on 0116 2120271.

Thursday 4 March 2021
Alan and Joan North Memorial Lecture
Roman Leicester transformed: a quarter century of excavations by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services
Nick Cooper, University of Leicester
Archaeological Services

Thursday 25 March 2021
The Hallaton Treasure: typical rituals?
Dr Frank Hargrave, Colchester and Ipswich Museums

Thursday 15 April 2021
Lost Houses of Stoneygate in Leicester
Neil Crutchley, Victorian Society

Thursday 29 April 2021
Leicestershire Waterside excavations
Stephen Baker, University of Leicester Archaeological Services

Thursday 13 May 2021
A Middle to Late Anglo-Saxon cemetery at Rothley, The Grange
Rob Atkins, Museum of London Archaeology

** Please note that the LAHS Library at The Guildhall, Leicester will remain closed until further notice due to the COVID-19 restrictions.

OTHER NEWS

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER CENTENARY

LAHS Committee Member Caroline Wessel has recently contributed an article to its 'Our History' website on the early music staff, who included Malcolm Sargent. This is at <https://ourhistory.le.ac.uk/introduction/home/our-first-staff/our-first-music-staff-and-their-supporters/>.

RURAL LIFE PAST AND PRESENT

Out-of-Print and Difficult-to-Find Books

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THE VAN GOGH EXPERIENCE IN LEICESTER – REOPENING

The Van Gogh Immersive Experience has now reopened at All Saints Church in Leicester. Using virtual projection, this 360 degree exhibition enables visitors to become ‘part of the spectacular, incomparable universe of Vincent Van Gogh’, discovering the life of the artist in a new way. It includes his time at the convent and in Arles, and extracts from the letters he wrote to his brother. It is described as ‘a unique sound and light show that will immerse you in the world renowned and familiar images of Vincent Van Gogh’, and is intended for families as well as other visitors of all ages. It has previously been shown in Naples and Brussels, and most recently at York St Mary’s during its UK premiere. Further details, including opening hours, ticket prices and the venue’s Covid-19 policy can be seen at <https://www.vangoghexpo.co.uk/leicester-practical-info/>.

CURATOR BATTLE! HIGHLIGHTING LEICESTERSHIRE MUSEUMS’ COLLECTIONS DURING LOCKDOWN

Helen Sharp, Curator (Archaeology), sends this account of how Leicestershire County Council Museums have been meeting the challenge of closure during the coronavirus pandemic: In March 2020 the County Council’s museums, heritage sites and collections stores closed due to the coronavirus pandemic and resulting lockdown. Along with other museums across the world we were faced with the issue of how to continue to make our collections available and engage with the public. For the Museum Collections Team this was a particular challenge as we do not currently have a website on which to showcase our wonderful and varied collections. Our museums have their own websites which highlight objects on display, but getting our stored collections online is more tricky.

Social media is a great way to reach people, and the Collections Team’s Instagram account @leicestershire_collections (www.instagram.com/leicestershire_collections/?hl=en) has been a fun way to do this, especially through #CuratorBattle!, a weekly challenge devised by The Yorkshire Museum which proved globally popular! #CuratorBattle! challenges museums to highlight their best objects on a particular theme each week, often in an irreverent style. The first challenge to become a hit, gaining international media coverage and generating over 220,000 engagements online, was Creepiest Object. The battle takes place on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook (search on any of these platforms for #CuratorBattle! and you will find many posts). Some of Leicestershire’s best offerings are here!

CREEPIEST OBJECT

We were a little late to the party with our Creepiest object, but we hope you like this wax faced doll with REAL blonde hair from c. 1890. Sleep tight, don't have nightmares!



FANTASTIC FAKES



This challenge was for our best fakes and forgeries. We've got a dodgy little Iron Age number for you that also happens to be a tongue twister - a copy of a copper alloy core of a Celtic stater coin of the Corieltavi! (British H - c.f.BM186/VA800-5 type for all you numismatists/coin geeks out there). This coin is imitating a gold coin and would have been plated with a thin layer of gold, whereas real ones are solid. However, some plated Iron Age coins seem more 'official', and it has been argued that coins were minted in this way when gold was in short supply. So, it could be that it was OK to fake it in the Iron Age! These coins are part of the Hallaton Treasure which was discovered 20 years ago this year.

BEST BLING

We liked the 'Best bling' challenge so much that we put five rings on it! This image was taken for our 2013 exhibition 'Treasure'! We have happy memories of displaying all our shiny stuff in one place at the same time. The blingiest ring in this shot is the huge 9th century gold finger ring found at Brooksby, which was probably made in what is now Germany. It may be squashed and missing its setting, but you can still get an idea of how magnificent the owner must have felt when wearing it.



STAR OBJECT

A tough choice, but we decided on the Symington Archive of corsetry, as we get interest from around the world in this unparalleled collection of 19th and 20th century shapewear, swimwear, patterns and advertising materials. R. & W. H. Symington & Co also made the infamous Liberty Bodice, designed to keep children suitably restricted, warm and upright.

This ecrú and brown sateen straight front corset dates from c1900. It maintains the small waist of earlier designs but it has a straight front rather than a curved busk, a feature that would predominate in later styles.

All the above images are Leicestershire County Council Museums copyright, and reproduced with their permission.

REOPENING OF COUNTY COUNCIL AND CITY COUNCIL MUSEUMS

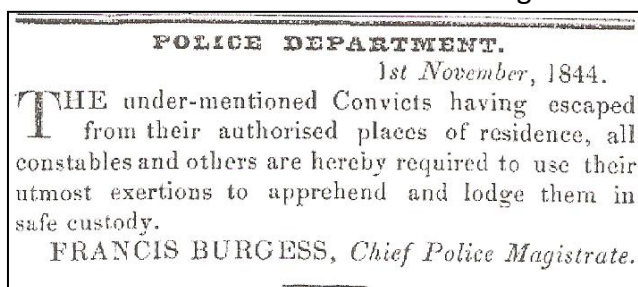
Leicester Museum and Art Gallery – the new name for New Walk Museum – will reopen on Monday 17 August, and the gardens at Belgrave Hall will reopen on Wednesday 19 August. Newarke Houses Museum, The Guildhall and Abbey Pumping Station will all reopen from Thursdays to Sundays on Thursday 27 August. Please visit www.leicestermuseums.org for full details of opening times. The number of visitors within the museums will need to be managed for their safety and that of staff. You are therefore requested to book timed tickets in advance at www.leicestermuseums.org/book-tickets/. Leicestershire County Council is working towards reopening its museums in early September. Once dates and opening hours are confirmed, full details will be published on its website at www.leicestershire.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/history-and-heritage/museums-in-leicestershire, and circulated to LAHS members by email.

CONVICTS IN THE FAMILY?

Your Newsletter editor has been making the best of the coronavirus restrictions to research two of her ancestors who were transported to Van Diemen's Land – later Tasmania – in 1839. Their crimes (theft - though admittedly quite a lot of it) seem quite trivial by today's standards. The two brothers obviously came from a very poor background, reflected not only in the Humberstone Gate area where they lived, one of the poorest in Leicester at the time, but the fact that seven of the 13 children in the family died as infants. The sort of things they stole could be sold to make some money - including a 6 lb joint of beef from the market, iron chairs left on the roadside by the local railway company, worsted wool items including gloves and cravats, and an iron grating from a house in a 'respectable' part of Leicester. The railway company was censured by the magistrates for leaving 'loose iron about the high-road', amounting to 'an inducement to theft, though it did not excuse the prisoners'; but one of the brothers was nothing if not enterprising in other ways.

In June 1838, 'the cunning rogue was not to be seen in the "lock up" at the Exchange when the officer was directed to bring him into the justice-room, but, after a short search he was discovered in a box of sawdust, into which he had burrowed like a rabbit'. He got a second sentence in Van Diemen's Land of seven years on top of his seven years' transportation for housebreaking, during a period when he absconded from his working party. He ended up on Norfolk Island, around 900 miles off the east coast of Australia with the other recidivists.

His brother, who was transported for 15 years, got a ticket of leave after serving half his sentence - but the record of when he was freed is annotated 'Outlaws'. I haven't got to the bottom of that yet, but suspect he also did a disappearing act. I can't find out what happened to them after they served their sentences, but if you think you may have an ancestor who was transported, there are a lot of sources online to help you explore. As well as those accessible through family history websites they include the National Library of Australia at www.nla.gov.au/research-guides/convicts, and Libraries Tasmania, which is at www.libraries.tas.gov.au/convict-portal/Pages/convicts.aspx. Port Arthur, one of the places where my ancestors were confined, is now part of the UNESCO World Heritage list of convict sites in Australia and Tasmania, which can be explored at <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1306>. The image above is from the *Hobart Town Gazette*, 5 November 1844, reproduced from the National Library of Australia for the purpose of study.



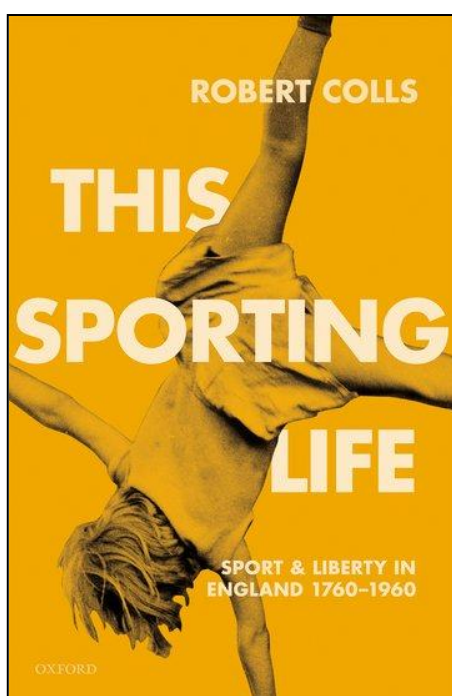
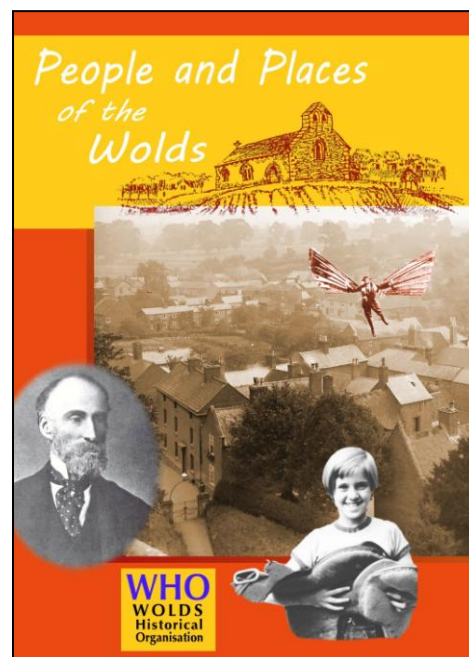
FORTHCOMING PUBLICATIONS

PEOPLE AND PLACES OF THE WOLDS

Bob Trubshaw, Chair of the Wolds Historical Organisation (WHO), sends news of its latest publication, *People and Places of the Wolds*, to be published on 15 September 2020. Contributions to this collection of essays and biographies reveal the life and times of people who were born or lived in the villages of Burton on the Wolds, Cotes, Hoton, Prestwold, Walton on the Wolds and Wymeswold. It starts with pagan Anglo-Saxon settlers and continues through to the living memories of contributors.

Along with the 'great and the good', the subjects include a locally-famous schoolmaster-cum-antiquarian; two men who both collected plants and climbed mountains; a soldier involved in the Charge of the Light Brigade in the Crimean War; a man transported to Australia; the 'gentry' who built Burton Hall; all the owners and occupiers of one of the manor farms; a Second World War airman who miraculously survived; a once-famous speedway rider; and a girl with a passion for riding horses.

Bob writes: 'The past is not something "out there". It is not even something which is fixed. Every new discovery in a sense changes the past. Sometimes by adding a little something "extra", or by clarifying what was poorly understood'. *People and Places of the Wolds* is a paperback with 117 pages, 19 colour photographs, 84 black and white photographs and two maps, and costs £9.95. Copies can be ordered by post (post and packing £2 to UK addresses) and payment can be made via PayPal. Email Bob at bobtrubs@indigogroup.co.uk for further details. Other articles and publications by WHO, including back issues of *The Wolds Historian*, are available online at www.hoap.co.uk/who.



THIS SPORTING LIFE:

SPORT AND LIBERTY IN ENGLAND, 1760-1960

This publication by Robert Colls, Professor of Cultural History at the International Centre for Sports History and Culture at De Montfort University, looks at the sporting lives of the English between the 18th and 20th centuries – including foxhunting in Leicestershire. It is described as offering 'a new type of cultural history, showing that sports had as much of an impact in defining English identity as gender, politics, education, class, and religion. It explains the sporting life as an embodiment of modern England as a country of liberty and courage, tradition and modernity, and provides insights into how sport impacts upon ideas of masculine identity and sense of place'. It is published by the Oxford University Press, 414pp, illus, ISBN 9780198208334, £25, and will be available from 27 August 2020.

A HISTORICAL FOOTNOTE

Gardening seems to have grown in popularity during the Covid-19 restrictions on other activities, prompting the Editor to take another look at the advice below. In the 1840s, as this extract illustrates, the cultivation of flowers was highly recommended as a pastime for women - particularly middle class ladies who had acquired a suburban villa with a garden and could not afford to employ a gardener. It is extracted from *Every Lady Her Own Flower Gardener* (1842) by Louisa Johnson – a rare publication loaned to the Editor some time ago by a friend when she was teaching a WEA course on Victorian advice manuals.

I HAVE been induced to compile this little work from hearing many of my companions regret that no single book contained a sufficiently condensed and general account of the business of a Flower Garden. "We require," they said, "a work in a small compass, which will ensure us to become our own gardener: we wish to know how to set about everything ourselves without expense, without being deluged with Latin words and technical terms, and without being obliged to pick our way through multiplied [sic] publications, redolent of descriptions, and not always particularly lucid. We require a practical work, telling us of useful flowers, simple modes of rearing them, simply expressed, and free from lists of plants and roots which require expensive methods of preservation. Some of us have gardens but we cannot afford a gardener: we like flowers, but we cannot attempt to take more than common pains to raise them. We require to know the hardiest flowers, and to comprehend the general business of the garden, undisturbed by fear of failure, and at the most economical scale of expense. Who will write us such a book?'...

The amusement of floriculture has become the dominant passion of the ladies of Great Britain. It is a passion most blessed in its effects, considered as an amusement or a benefit. Nothing humanises and adorns the female mind more surely than the taste for ornamental gardening. It compels the reason to act, and the judgment to observe; it is favourable to meditation of the most serious kind; it exercises the fancy in harmless and elegant occupation, and braces the system by its healthful tendency. A flower-garden, to the young and single of my sex, acts upon the heart and affections as a nursery acts upon the matronly feelings. It attaches them to their home; it throws a powerful charm over the spot dedicated to such deeply interesting employment; and it lures them from dwelling too deeply upon the unavoidable disappointments and trials of life, which sooner or later disturb and disquiet the heart...

Many females are unequal to the fatigue of bending down to flowers, and particularly object to the stooping posture. In this case, ingenuity alone is required to raise the flowers to a convenient height; and, by so doing, to increase the beauty and picturesque appearance of the garden. Old barrels cut in half, tubs, pails, &c., neatly painted outside, or adorned with rural ornaments, and raised upon feet neatly carved, or mounds of earth, stand in lieu of richer materials, such as vases, parapet walls, and other expensive devices, which ornament the gardens of the wealthy. I have seen these humble materials shaped into forms as pleasing to the eye, and even more consonant to our damp climate, than marble vases. They never look green from time, and are renewed at a very trifling expense...

This newsletter is edited by Cynthia Brown and published by Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society. Further information about the Society, its publications and other activities can be found on its website at www.lahs.org.uk.

**THE LEICESTERSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGICAL &
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